DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 112 463 EA 007 497

AUTHOR	Walizer, Michael H.; And Others
TITLE	The Walbridge Academy. Final Evaluation Report.
INSTITUTION	Information Services, Inc., Kalamazoo, Mich.
SPONS AGENCY	Grand Rapids Public Schools, Mich.
PUB DATE	15 Jun 75
NOTE	64p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$3.32 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	*Alternative Schools; *Behavior Change; Curriculum; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Parent Participation; *Program Descriptions; *Program Evaluation; Secondary Education; *Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	*Walbridge Academy

ABSTRACT

Walbridge Academy, the oldest alternative education program in the Grand Rapids School System, has a student population of about 250 students in grades 7 through 12. The majority of students are admitted to Walbridge on a first-come, first-served basis; however, some positions are reserved for students who have been placed on extended suspension by the regular schools. The school employs a behavior modification system centering on token points. The curriculum includes reading, math, science, history, social studies, and English. The evaluation objectives focused on student progress toward graduation, social and academic attainment, program strengths and suggestions, and program observation and description. Extensive information on the findings in the areas of student population, academic achievement, absentee rates, high school credit acquisition, a follow-up of 1973-74 school year students, staff evaluations, student evaluations, and parent evaluations are included. Walbridge Academy is achieving its objectives with a large proportion of its students. Suggestions are included in an attempt to aid further improvement of the program. (Author/IRT)

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ED112463

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

THE WALBRIDGE ACADEMY

Submitted to

The Office of Curriculum Planning and Evaluation
Grand Rapids Public Schools
Grand Rapids, Michigan

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Walbridge Academy, the oldest alternative education program in the Grand Rapids School System, was initiated in the fall of 1967. The program was originally designed to serve male wards of the court under sixteen years of age, but now comprises an alternative educational option for a wide range of students.

The Academy is located at 1024 Ionia Street, N.W., near the downtown area of Grand Rapids and has a student population of about 250 students in grades 7 through 12. The school day is structured into nine (9) forty-three minute periods. The program employs a "behavior modification" system where token "points" are awarded to students for valued types of behavior. Students may choose to spend their points in a variety of ways; most students choose free time in the recreation room that is available, or small amounts of money. Points are generally awarded by teachers in the classroom setting, with art, home economics, industrial arts, interest reading, and typing excluded since they are seen as "self-rewarding." The curriculum of the school also includes reading, math, science, history, social studies, and English, and there are opportunities to take classes at the Kent Skills Center. In addition to substantive testing in the classroom setting, pre and post standardized tests in reading and math are regularly administered.

Selection Process

There are two ways in which students are admitted to Walbridge. The majority of students (200) are taken on a first-come, first-served basis from among students who voluntarily apply. The remaining available positions are reserved for students who have been placed on extended suspension by the regular schools, and who may choose to attend Walbridge as an alternative educational program. Upon acceptance,

orientation meetings are held with counselors to detail rules, procedures and expectations. Students leave the program on a volunteer basis, or as a result of a suspension, or--preferably--by earning enough high school credits to graduate. Currently, the Academy has more applicants than available positions.

Procedures

Although the objectives, goals, and the basic policies of Walbridge Academy are consistent with those of the Grand Rapids Public Schools, there are some procedures and practices which make the program unique. The first is that new students attend the academy for a half day by taking four courses for credit. After a minimum two-week probationary period to determine if attendance, social behavior, and achievement merit expanding courses, the student may elect, with the assistance of a counselor, to take as many as eight credit courses per day. Most students choose to attend school for only the half day session, either in the morning or afternoon.

All classes are arranged on a continuous progress model rather than by grade level, with all instruction individualized. In addition, all courses operate on a test-retest basis until material is mastered. A grade of "C" is the lowest possible grade for mastery, and students move at their own pace rather than according to a set schedule. Two commercial instructional programs are utilized by the school, the Alpha system for reading and the Educational Development Lab (EDL) produced by McGraw Hill

A major characteristic of the program is the manner in which behavior modification principles are utilized to increase achievement and maintain socially acceptable behavior. The curriculum is composed of sets of "mini-courses" which are constructed by the teachers, based on a variety of instructional materials. The mini-courses vary in length and difficulty but are designed to be mastered

in a relatively short time period so that the student may receive a grade. In addition to a grade, the teacher may reward as many as 500 points to a student who receives at least a 96 percent on the post test which is administered at the conclusion of a mini-course. Smaller sums of points may be rewarded for daily work or as a result of individual contracts. These points may be "spent" for free time (ten minutes for 100 points) in a recreation room where smoking, music, dancing, ping-pong, pool and other social activities take place under the supervision of the manager of the room, or they may be cashed in for 1¢ per ten points. Some points are also awarded by counselors on the basis of individual behavioral contracts.

Academy Policies

Behavioral standards and disciplinary procedures are delineated in a statement on school policy entitled, *"Walbridge Academy Rules and Policies."* According to this policy, the school imposes three major categories of disciplinary action: major time-outs, minor time-outs, and suspension. A "minor time-out" consists of a thirty-minute time period spent in a special room where talking, moving, reading or other activities are prohibited, and may be received for such offenses as:

"Being out of class without a proper pass."

"Not following procedures (classroom)."

"Being disrespectful or hassling a student or staff person or any person in building."

"Smoking where not permitted."

"Cheating the system."

Any staff member may send a student out of the building and recommend a "major time-out." The recommendation for a major time-out may be enacted by a counselor for more serious violations such as:

"Being involved in a fight by shouting, encouraging, or staying around the area where a fight is taking place."

"Destroying property."

"Verbally threatening a staff member."

"Physically threatening another student."

"Suspicion of having, using, or selling drugs in school."

"A number of similar minor time-outs or regular time-outs in a ten day period."

Again, according to the school policy, suspensions of various length are also possible for such violations as:

"Fighting."

"Assaulting another student-situation where one student fights another student who doesn't want to fight."

"Assaulting a staff member."

"Physically threatening a staff member."

"Violations of city, state or federal laws, especially in relation to use of drugs."

Other ways in which the Academy differs from local conventional schools include the fact that there are no homerooms or study halls. Physical education facilities are nonexistent, but students do have the option to be bused to such activities once a week. There is no formal varsity athletic program or other types of formal extracurricular activities. In addition, the school utilizes almost no support services such as attendance officers, psychologists, psychiatrists, school social workers, homebound teachers, or police liaison officers.

The Academy is in contact with the community through a Citizens Advisory Committee which meets once a month to discuss certain issues that may arise. In addition, as determined from counselor logs, there is much contact with the parents of the students which frequently is in the form of telephone conversations

between parents and counselors and parent contacts at school. However, some students are in group foster homes, wards of the court or on probation so there are frequent visits to the Academy by various agency personnel. And finally, there are many visitors to the program who wish to learn more about the Academy for a variety of reasons. A more detailed study of this school-community contact will be provided in a following section.

DESCRIPTION OF STAFF AND FACILITIES

Staff

There are twenty-three (23) full-time staff members, three (3) interns from Indiana University, and six (6) student teachers and local college student volunteers. The staff is composed of the following:

Number	*Position*
1	*Director*
1	*Assistant Director/Counselor*
3	*Advisors/Counselors*
9	*Teachers*
5	*Aides*
1	*Secretary*
1	*Records Coordinator*
1	*Recreation Room Manager*
3	*Interns*
1	*Custodian*
6	*Volunteers and/or Student Teachers*

Physical Facilities

The Walbridge Academy is housed in an older three-story brick structure with rooms surrounding a large corridor area in the center of each floor. The following facilities are available:

Number	*Type of Facility*
2	*Mathematics rooms*
1	*English/Social Studies room*
1	*Social Studies room*
1	*Science room*
1	*Alpha Reading room*
1	*EDL room*
1	*Central office*
1	*Time-out room/Typing room*
1	*Recreation room*
2	*Counseling rooms*
1	*Area divided into two counseling areas and records area*
1	*Teachers' room*
1	*Industrial arts shop*
1	*Art room*
1	*Home Economics/Lunch room*
1	*Resource Library*

CURRICULUM

Each of the teachers at Walbridge were asked to describe the nature of their classroom activities and to list the commercially available materials that they use either directly or in preparing mini-courses. The descriptions given below have been abstracted from those provided by each teacher.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

DESCRIPTION: There are four (4) basic objectives in Arts and Crafts. The first is to increase perceptual awareness and retention through increased perceptual discrimination. The second is to develop a vocabulary for dealing with art media, design and composition. The third is to develop the ability to analyze the interactions of shape, form, color line, texture and space in producing a whole art form. The fourth is to increase knowledge and application of media, tools and materials as they relate to artistic production and experiences. It is hoped that in the pursuit of these objectives, students will creatively experience art and express positive attitudes toward the role of the visual arts in society. Activities conducted include sawing, flaying, gluing, staining and construction.

MATERIALS: Paper, cardboard, paints, clay, wood, and scrap pieces of plastic, metal and wood.

"How To" books by Walter T. Foster, filmstrips, and books by Crown.

ENGLISH

DESCRIPTION: The objectives of the English mini-courses are to increase the student's reading level, expand his vocabulary, and improve basic writing and communication skills. The mini-courses offered vary in length, difficulty, and subject matter. In addition, 700 paperback books are used to stimulate student interest in reading. Creative writing and advanced literature are also offered for developing students' appreciation of aesthetic thought and judgement.

MATERIALS: Holt Impact Series: Holt, Rinehart, Winston

Unknown Worlds
Sight Lines
Conflict
Larger Than Life
Search for America

ENGLISH - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS: The Concerns of Man Series: McDougal, Littell & Company

- The Family
- The Environment
- Love
- War and Peace
- Brotherhood
- Search For Self

English 2200	Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich
Gods and Godesses in Art and Legend	Washington Square Press
Guide to Modern English - 7, 8, 11	Scott, Foresman & Company
Stranger Than Fiction	Globe Book Company
Chapters	Jamestown Publishers
Writing Incredibly Short Plays, Poems, Stories	Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich
Words to the Wise	Scholastic Books
Basic Goals in Spelling (7 & 8)	McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.
dic-tion-ar-y skilz	Scholastic Book Services
The American College Dictionary	Random House

Paperback books (approximately 700) from various publishers.

HOME ECONOMICS

DESCRIPTION: The three (3) objectives of Home Economics are: 1) to learn basic sewing skills; 2) to develop the ability to follow a cooking recipe; and 3) to develop basic social skills by working together in the kitchen laboratory setting. When these basic skills have been developed, there is an opportunity for students to participate in advanced courses concerning foods, sewing, and consumer education.

MATERIALS: Films from Board of Education:

- Phoebe
- Escape to Nowhere
- Skipper Learns a Lesson
- Choosing for Happiness

HOME ECONOMICS - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS: Film from Planned Parenthood:

And Then One Year

Foxfire	Anchor Press, Garden City, New York
Ourbodies Ourselves	Simon & Schuster, New York
Consumer Beware	Bantam Books, New York

INDUSTRIAL ARTS

DESCRIPTION: Seven (7) areas of general shop are presented in Industrial Arts: woods, metals, leathers, plastics, electrical, home repair, and refinishing. Students are encouraged to pursue their own areas of interest within a flexible program sequence. Each student is encouraged and assessed on the basis of his growth in skills.

MATERIALS: Commercially, about every material that is needed for effective teaching is available.

Films, resource centers, Industrial Arts Department of Board of Education, etc.

LIBRARY/RESOURCE CENTER

DESCRIPTION: Seven (7) classes in interest reading are conducted in the Library/Resource Center. Students are free to select from the library's holdings and are exposed to various types of media. Television, filmstrips, tape recorders, record players, typewriters, overhead projectors, transparencies, and movie projectors are employed to supplement printed material. The objectives of these classes include the development of a better sense of responsibility and increased writing and reading skills.

MATERIALS:

Filmstrips	A.V.E.
Filmstrips	Coronet
Filmstrips	Encyclopedia Britannica Educational Corporation
Time Magazine	
Newsweek	
Sports Illustration	

LIBRARY/RESOURCE CENTER - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS:

Hot Rod	
National Geographic	
Grand Rapids Press	
Jet Magazine	
Ebony Magazine and Ebony Jr.	
Good Housekeeping	
Co-Ed and Forecast	Scholastic Magazine
Science World	Scholastic Magazine
Our World	Scholastic Magazine
Current Events	Scholastic Magazine
Various movies	Modern Talking Movies, Inc. Michigan Consolidated Gas Co. Department of Education
Overhead Projector Transparencies	
Records (musical or non-musical)	
T.V. assignments (stories, news items, games, music, speeches, etc.)	

READING

DESCRIPTION: Through an individualized instructional and testing program it is hoped that students will improve their reading skills. These skills include vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and study skills. In addition to actual skills acquisition, the development of student attitudes is considered important. In particular, the development of the awareness that one can work to improve reading skills is encouraged.

READING - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS: Alpha Learning Corporation materials. The Corporation provides testing materials, student flowcharts, and unit tests.

They also provide materials from various companies upon which they base their program. These materials include:

SRA Reading Laboratories I, II, III	
SRA Reading for Understanding, Kits I and II	
Reading for Concepts, Books A-H	Webster, McGraw-Hill
Specific Skills Series:	Barnell-Loft
Detecting the Sequence)	
Using the Context)	
Locating the Answer)	
Getting the Facts) - Books A-F	
Following Directions)	
Getting the Main Idea)	
Drawing Conclusions)	
Crossroads Series	Noble & Noble
Gateway Literature Series	The MacMillan Company
Scholastic Action Kit	Scholastic Book Services
Stanford Vocabulary Books	McGraw-Hill
Scholastic Black Literature Series	Scholastic Book Services
Scope Magazine	Scholastic Book Services

READING/SOCIAL STUDIES

DESCRIPTION: In combination with the development of social studies skills, improvement in reading and writing abilities are the objectives of this class. Social studies is used as the vehicle for instruction in reading and writing using a wide range of materials and media.

READING/SOCIAL STUDIES - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS:

Exploring the Urban World	Globe Book Company
Living in a Consumers World	Globe Book Company
The Afro-American in U.S. History	Globe Book Company
Minorities U.S.A.	Globe Book Company
The American Adventure Series	Scholastic Book Services
American Political Behavior	Ginn
Exploring American History	Globe Book Company
Free and the Brave	Rand McNally

This is a list of the basic textbooks used. There are supplements to these and other materials which are used in the class.

SCIENCE

DESCRIPTION: Mini-courses in Science are either self-contained with no text involved, self-contained involving textbook use, or textbook assignments with accompanying study sheets. The mini-courses involve a wide variety of activities such as projects, experiments, games, puzzles, outdoor activities, and art work. Field trips, workshops and camping trips are also available for student participation. In attempting to reach the overall objective of increasing students' science skills, an attempt is made to create an environment conducive to independent learning, productive classroom work and responsible social behavior.

MATERIALS: ECOLOGY:

Basic Ecology Ecology	Benziger, Inc.
Ecology How and Why?	Grosset & Dunlap
Science of Survival	The MacMillan Company
Oceans	Benziger, Inc.
Freshwaters	Benziger, Inc.
Our Polluted World	Xerox
Ideas and Investigations: Ecology	Prentice Hall

SCIENCE - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS:

PHYSICAL SCIENCE:

Electronics How & Why?	
Electricity How & Why?	
Magnetism How & Why?	
Field Guide to Astronomy Without a Telescope	Houghton-Mifflin Company
Pathways--Sound and Light	Globe Book Company
Matter and Energy	
The Forces of Nature	

EARTH SCIENCE:

Earth and its Story	Xerox
Rocks and Rain Modern Science I, Modern Earth Science	Holt, Rinehart & Winston
Weather and You	Xerox
What is Weather?	Benefic Press
What is the Earth?	Benefic Press
Using Maps - no text	
Pathways--The Earth We Live In	
Man and Energy in Space	Globe Book Company
Oceans of Air and Water	
What is Water?	Benefic Press

Independent Study

BIOLOGY:

Pathways--Built for Living	
The Next Generation	Globe Book Company
The Materials of Life	
Human Body How and Why?	
Health and Growth	Scott, Foresman & Company
First Aid	Doubleday & Company, Inc.
Ideas and Investigations	
Inquiry	
Evolution	Prentice Hall
Genetics	
Homoestasis	
Know About Drugs	Xerox
Drugs--Your Friend	CEBCO Standard Publishers
Drugs--Your Enemy	
Drugs--It's Up to You	

ZOOLOGY:

Insects How and Why? - I	Grosset & Dunlap

SCIENCE - (Cont'd.)

MATERIALS: ZOOLOGY - (Cont'd.)

Insects How and Why? - II	Grosset & Dunlap
Reptiles How and Why?	Grosset & Dunlap
Birds How and Why?	Grosset & Dunlap
Fish How and Why?	Grosset & Dunlap
Fish Facts Fishes and Their Ways	MacMillan
(Ants and Bees)	
(Seashells)	

BOTANY:

What is a Tree?	Benefic Press
Trees How and Why?	Grosset & Dunlap

CHEMISTRY:

Pathways--Chemistry of Metals	Globe Book Company
Chemistry of Mixtures	Globe Book Company
The Materials of Nature	Globe Book Company
Chemistry How and Why?	Grosset and Dunlap
TRI Chemistry Vol. 2-2, 1-3	Teaching Machines, Inc.
Wild Animals How and Why?	Grosset and Dunlap
Masculinity and Femininity	Houghton-Mifflin Company

MATHEMATICS

DESCRIPTION: The primary goal of the mathematics program is to develop an environment which allows each student to work at an individualized pace. Through a process of testing and retesting, mini-courses are utilized to develop basic math skills. These skills include addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication of whole numbers, decimals and fractions.

MATERIALS: Science: How and Why Science Books Series

Math: Shaw Hiehle

Individualized Computational Skill Program	Houghton Mifflin Company
Modern Consumer Education	Grolier Educational Corp.
Text: Modern Algebra I	Houghton Mifflin Company
Text: Algebra II	Houghton Mifflin Company
Text: Geometry	
Text: Twenty Century Accounting	

SCHOOL/HOME CONTACTS

One of the unusual aspects of Walbridge Academy noted in the Interim Report was the degree of parental involvement in school activities. In order to document the degree of such involvement, log books kept by the school staff were examined.

Because of the large size and bulky nature of the log books, it was decided to select a one-month period for careful examination. The month of February, 1975 was selected because there were no holidays or interruptions of the school calendar during that month. Table 1 presents a summary of the contents of the February log book.

Table 1

School/Home Contacts by Type and Grade Level
for February, 1975

Grade	Phone	Letter	Personal Contact
6, 7, 8th.	22	20	77
9th.	16	14	69
10th.	15	11	60
11th.	12	6	28
12th.	2	3	5
TOTAL	67	54	239

Total Contacts = 67 + 54 + 239 = 360 for month.

If these figures are projected over a ten-month period, a total of 3,600 school/home contacts would be made during the school year. According to the Director and counselors, the month of February is representative of their activi-

ties for the school year. Translating this figure would represent more than eighteen (18) school/home contacts per student for each student enrolled at Walbridge. This number is evidence of the high degree of parental involvement with the operation of this program.

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND PROCEDURES

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES

The unique nature of Walbridge Academy requires that specific evaluation objectives be pursued. The following objectives guided this evaluation:

Evaluation Objective I--Progress Toward Graduation

Ascertain the extent to which students graduated in 1974 are currently: 1) continuing their education, or 2) successfully employed. Determine if current students are acquiring graduation credits at increased or satisfactory rates.

Evaluation Objective II--Social and Academic Attainments

Determine whether students are progressing toward graduation at improved rates with better attendance, fewer behavioral problems, and greater acquisition of academic skills.

Evaluation Objective III--Program Strengths and Suggestions

Ascertain staff, student, and parent feelings and attitudes about the strengths of each program and suggestions for strengthening each program.

Evaluation Objective IV--Program Observation and Description

Observe the referral and intake process, the instructional and counseling procedures, and the termination mechanisms in order to understand, describe and report the dynamics of the program.

The purpose of this evaluation is twofold. This project should provide information to educational planners and administrators which is immediately useful for making administrative and program decisions. One of the most severe problems of educational leaders is the acquisition of reliable, accurate, unbiased program information. This evaluation plan provides such information.

Secondly, but of equal importance, this evaluation should serve the needs of the program being examined. Out of this program evaluation should come a set of assessments and recommendations which can be used to strengthen the project. No educational enterprise is without its limitations; but to deal with these circumstances, sound evaluation is necessary.

EVALUATION PROCEDURES

The information contained in this report was gathered and reported to insure that each evaluation objective is achieved. Procedures which have been utilized to obtain each objective are specified below.

Objective I--Progress Toward Graduation

Procedures:

Prepare roster of 1973-74 students.

Determine which students are still in school and indicate in which programs.

Of those students not currently in school, fifty students were randomly selected for "follow-up" study to determine their current educational or career status. ISI staff determined such student status by: 1) asking school officials, and 2) two telephone attempts.

Objective II--Social and Academic Attainments

Procedures:

Prepare roster of 1973-74 students.

Utilizing whatever units the project uses, produce a frequency distribution of student progress.

From school records, prepare roster with school attendance figures for Fall, 1973.

From school records, prepare roster with school attendance figures for Fall, 1974.

Prepare a table of mean differences of attendance rates.

Prepare and administer counselor and teacher rating scales and survey as to behavioral improvement of students (an adaptation of the Detroit Development Profile).

Provide statistics of scores on available standardized tests for reading and math and for rating scale data.

Objective III--Program Strengths and Suggestions

Procedures:

Develop staff, parent and student questionnaires and interview schedules.

Interview all staff in Fall, 1974.

Distribute and collect student and parent questionnaires.

Prepare frequency tables of parent and student responses.

Distribute and collect staff questionnaires.

Prepare frequency tables of staff responses.

Conduct follow-up interviews of staff in Spring, 1975.

Objective IV--Program Observation and Description

Twenty-one on-site visits were made by evaluation specialists of Information Services Incorporated.

Pertinent documents and materials were examined to determine referral, intake, process and termination procedures.

FINDINGS

STUDENT POPULATION

This initial description of the student population was constructed from a review of the available student records. A total of 206 data sets were examined and the following information was obtained. It should be noted that much of the data were simply not available for each student enrolled, which obviously results in variations in the data reported. The problem of incomplete student records or files seems to be inherent in any evaluation process. Data reported here, therefore, are as complete as possible.

AGE

Age	*Number*	*Percent*
19	*5*	*2*
18	*15*	*7*
17	*33*	*16*
16	*36*	*18*
15	*44*	*22*
14	*40*	*20*
13	*25*	*12*
12	*5*	*2*
	203	

SEX

Sex	*Number*	*Percent*
Female	*49*	*24*
Male	*153*	*76*
	202	

PREDOMINANT ETHNIC BACKGROUND

	Number	*Percent*
American Indian	*3*	*2*
Black	*75*	*40*
White	*104*	*56*
Spanish	*3*	*2*
	185	

A survey of student cumulative records showed that employment information was available for 174 students. Most students enrolled at Walbridge tend to come from families whose parents are blue-collar or semiskilled factory workers. Many parents are unemployed. This data is shown below.

PARENTS' OCCUPATION

	Number	*Percent*
White collar	*2*	*1*
Blue collar	*120*	*69*
Unemployed	*52*	*30*
	174	

TOTAL HIGH SCHOOL CREDITS EARNED 1973-74

N = 173

Range: Low = 0, High = 90

Average = 21.6 credits

TOTAL DAYS ABSENT 1973-74

N = 175

Range: Low = 0, High = 165

Average = 47.1 days absent

It can be seen from the data above, which was collected from cumulative records, that on the average students at Walbridge missed about 47 days of school last year. This represents a high absenteeism rate of over twenty-six percent (26%) of a 180-day school year.

STANDARDIZED READING TEST

The latest 1974 administration of the Nelson reading test is recorded.

N = 89

Range: Low = 2.0, High = 9.5 grade equivalent scores

Average = 5.8 grade equivalent

STANDARDIZED MATH TEST

The latest 1974 administration of the WRAT is recorded.

N = 93

Range: Low = 3.0, High = 10.7 grade equivalent scores

Average = 5.6 grade equivalent

ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Aside from credit acquisition in regular classroom settings, Walbridge Academy has initiated a standardized testing program in reading and math. Currently, instruments utilized to determine student academic growth include the Nelson Reading Test (reading) and the Wide Range Achievement Test (math). Testing is conducted in the fall and the spring of the same year to get pre and post-test information on each student. There were one-hundred-thirty-eight (138) students who entered Walbridge in September of 1974 and were still in the program as of May, 1975. There were evident logistical problems during this initial year of school-wide testing, facilitated by a lack of persons specifically designated testing responsibility, and further complicated by the high rate of absenteeism among students. At midyear a staff member was assigned such testing responsibilities and completed pretests for many students. Unfortunately, the person became ill in the spring so that as of June 1, 1975, very few students had both pre and post-test scores.

The table below shows the number of students in each grade with pre and post-test scores in reading and math. Data from these students are included in the following tables on academic progress in the Walbridge Academy.

Table 2

Distribution of Students
Pre and Post-Tested by Grade Level

Grade	Number of Students Enrolled for Full Year	Number of Students Pre and Post-Tested Reading	Math
7	10	0	0
8	20	1	2
9	29	10	14
10	35	7	8
11	26	7	8
12	18	2	3
TOTAL	138	27	35

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Table 3

Pre and Post-Tests by Grade Level:
Reading and Mathematics

Grade	Student Number	Reading			Mathematics		
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
8	001	5.8	8.0	+2.2	5.7	6.3	+ .6
	002	____	____	____	3.6	4.0	+ .4
	Averages	5.8	8.0	+2.2	4.6	5.2	+ .5
9	001	4.6	5.7	+1.1	4.7	4.2	- .5
	002				3.2	3.9	+ .7
	003				5.2	5.5	+ .3
	004	4.6	3.7	- .9	3.8	3.0	- .8
	005	6.2	6.6	+ .4	5.9	6.5	+ .6
	006	6.5	4.7	-1.8	4.5	6.9	+2.4
	007	6.8	6.7	- .1	5.9	6.3	+ .4
	008	6.5	5.8	- .7	6.2	5.0	-1.2
	009	6.0	7.0	+1.0	5.0	6.1	+1.1
	010				3.6	3.6	0
	011				3.2	5.6	+2.4
	012				4.4	5.5	+1.1
	013	8.6	10.3	+1.7	8.8	8.8	0
	014	9.4	9.6	+ .2	6.7	6.1	- .6
	Averages	6.7	5.6	+ .1	5.1	5.5	+ .5
10	001	7.4	9.1	+1.7	7.6	6.3	-1.3
	002	7.2	10.1	+2.9	7.5	9.4	+1.9
	003	9.6	10.5	+ .9	8.8	10.0	+1.2
	004	5.3	5.9	+ .6	6.0	5.7	- .3
	005	9.1	10.5	+1.4	6.5	7.6	+1.1
	006	8.6	9.1	+ .5	10.7	8.8	-1.9
	007	4.5	2.8	-1.7	3.8	4.7	+ .9
	008	____	____	____	4.9	5.2	+ .3
	Averages	7.4	9.2	+ .9	7.9	8.2	+ .2
11	001	10.5	9.6	- .9	5.2	5.6	+ .4
	002	6.5	7.8	+1.3	5.7	6.7	+1.0
	003	10.5	10.5	0	8.8	10.7	+1.9
	004	7.5	8.6	+1.1	4.4	7.5	+3.1
	005	2.9	3.1	+ .2	4.6	3.2	-1.4
	006	3.9	3.7	- .2	6.5	5.3	-1.2

Table 3 - (Cont'd.)

Grade	Student Number	Reading			Mathematics		
		Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain	Pre-Test	Post-Test	Gain
11 (Cont'd.)	007	7.1	9.6	+2.5	8.0	10.5	+2.5
	008	___	___	___	8.6	9.7	+1.1
	Averages	7.0	7.6	+ .6	6.5	7.4	+ .9
12	001				6.1	5.5	- .6
	002	3.6	4.7	+1.1	2.3	3.6	+1.3
	003	8.5	9.0	+ .5	6.9	6.3	- .6
	Averages	6.0	6.8	+ .8	5.1	5.1	0

Because of the incomplete nature of the test data, it is difficult to develop definite conclusions on the academic achievement (as described earlier in this report) of students in the Walbridge Academy. However, several generalizations seem possible from the current data. First, most students enter Walbridge performing far below their grade level in reading and math. Eighth grade students entering Walbridge exhibit mean grade equivalency scores of 2.2 years behind grade level in reading and 2.8 years behind grade level in math. Ninth graders entered 2.3 years ($\bar{x}$ scores) behind in reading and an average of 3.9 years behind in math. Tenth graders were 2.6 years behind in reading and 2.1 years in math. Eleventh graders were 4.0 years behind in reading and 4.5 years in math. Twelfth graders entered 6.0 years behind grade level in reading and 6.9 years behind grade level in math.

Given the prior academic performance of these students in reading and math, it would seem unreasonable to expect radical changes in this pattern. There is evidence of very positive progress in both math and reading in all grade levels, with the exception of twelfth graders' scores in math which remained stable. In many cases, students have progressed over one grade level between the pre and post-

test dates. Data presented in this report provides strong indication that the program in reading and math is successfully reversing poor achievement trends exhibited by Walbridge students. It is suggested that there is a need for more thorough and complete data to assess the true effects of the reading and math curriculum on the total student body of the school.

COMPARISON OF ABSENTEEISM RATES

The staff constructed a roster of sixth through twelfth graders initially enrolled at Walbridge Academy in fall, 1974. Data was accessible for a total of fifty-one (51) students (of a total of sixty-one). Table 4 shows the number of days absent for each student during the past school year (1973-74) obtained from cumulative records, compared to the number of days absent for the first semester of this year (1974-75) at Walbridge. Monthly absentee rates are calculated to allow appropriate comparison of attendance trends.

Table 4

Absenteeism Rate Comparisons

Code #	Grade	Total Days Absent 1973-74	Monthly Rate	Days Absent Fall Semester 1974-75	Monthly Rate	Difference in Monthly Rate
01	7	29	2.9	33	6.6	+ 3.7
02	7	49	4.9	40	8.0	+ 3.1
03	7	82	8.2	63	12.6	+ 4.4
04	7	35	3.5	65	13.0	+ 9.5
05	7	12	1.2	10	2.0	+ .8
06	7	77	7.7	51	10.2	+ 2.5
07	7	75	7.5	35	7.0	- .5
08	7	17	1.7	6	1.2	- .5
09	7	28	2.8	3	.6	- 2.2
10	8	27	2.7	35	7.0	+ 4.3
11	8	74	7.4	32	6.4	- 1.0
12	8	18	1.8	27	5.4	+ 3.6
13	8	35	3.5	11	2.2	- 1.3
14	8	44	4.4	65	13.0	+ 8.6
15	8	55	5.5	38	7.6	+ 2.1
16	8	10	1.0	1	.2	- .8
17	8	82	8.2	48	9.6	+ 1.4
18	9	93	9.3	24	4.8	- 4.5
19	9	42	4.2	12	2.4	- 1.8
20	9	49	4.9	41	8.2	+ 3.3
21	9	81	8.1	53	10.6	+ 2.5
22	9	63	6.3	0	0	- 6.3
23	9	55	5.5	14	2.8	- 2.7
24	9	52	5.2	46	9.2	+ 4.0

Table 4 - (Cont'd.)

Code #	Grade	Total Days Absent 1973-74	Monthly Rate	Days Absent Fall Semester 1974-75	Monthly Rate	Difference in Monthly Rate
25	9	13	1.3	4	.8	- .5
26	9	162	16.2	29	5.8	-10.4
27	10	84	8.4	46	9.2	+ .8
28	10	22	2.2	10	2.0	- .2
29	10	8	.8	30	6.0	- 5.2
30	10	6	.6	43	8.6	+ 8.0
31	10	56	5.6	25	5.0	- .6
32	10	43	4.3	14	2.8	- 1.5
33	10	33	3.3	17	3.4	+ .1
34	10	23	2.3	45	9.0	+ 6.7
35	10	15	1.5	41	8.2	+ 6.7
36	10	96	9.6	30	6.0	- 3.6
37	10	75	7.5	29	5.8	- 1.7
38	10	17	1.7	28	5.6	+ 3.9
39	11	26	2.6	33	6.6	+ 4.0
40	11	13	1.3	25	5.0	+ 3.7
41	11	128	12.8	15	3.0	- 9.8
42	11	16	1.6	29	5.8	+ 4.2
43	11	7	.7	27	5.4	+ 4.7
44	11	5	.5	17	3.4	+ 2.9
45	11	31	3.1	40	8.0	+ 4.9
46	11	109	10.9	41	8.2	- 2.7
47	11	35	3.5	15	3.0	- .5
48	12	5	.5	10	2.0	+ 1.5
49	12	46	4.6	23	4.6	0
50	12	36	3.6	33	6.6	+ 3.0
51	12	15	1.5	34	6.8	+ 5.3

Thirty (30) of the students studied demonstrated higher rates of absenteeism during their initial year at Walbridge Academy, while twenty (20) students exhibited more frequent attendance rates. Stated simply, approximately forty percent (40%) of students entering Walbridge Academy improve attendance, while sixty percent (60%) exhibit slightly poorer attendance than they did the previous year.

COMPARISON OF HIGH SCHOOL CREDIT ACQUISITION RATE

A roster of tenth, eleventh and twelfth grade students who had entered Walbridge for the first time in the fall of 1974 was constructed. These students could have earned high school credits the previous school year. There were thirty-four (34) such students and credit data were available for all but four (4) of them. In Table 5 the number of high school credits earned for the 1973-74 school year are compared to the number of high school credits earned in the first semester of the current school year (1974-75) at Walbridge. The rate of credit acquisition for the first semester is projected for a full year to allow for appropriate comparison. The differences of rates of acquisition are then compared.

Table 5

High School Credit Acquisition Rate Comparisons

Code #	Grade	Total Credits Earned 1973-74	Credits Earned Fall Semester 1974-75	Projected for Full Year	Difference in Yearly Rate
01	10	25	4.5	9	- 16
02	10	10	11	22	+ 12
03	10	10	9	18	+ 8
04	10	14	6	12	- 2
05	10	3	5.5	11	+ 8
06	10	25	21	42	+ 17
07	10	20	12.5	25	+ 5
08	10	0	13.5	27	+ 27
09	10	0	6	12	+ 12
10	10	60	8.5	17	- 43
11	10	16	12	24	+ 8
12	10	0	10.5	21	+ 21
13	10	19	9	18	- 1
14	10	20	16	32	+ 12
15	11	0	22.5	45	+ 45
16	11	50	14	28	- 22
17	11	7	14	28	+ 21
18	11	40	19.5	39	- 1
19	11	3	16	32	+ 29
20	11	60	27.5	55	- 5

Table 5 - (Cont'd.)

Code #	Grade	Total Credits Earned 1973-74	Credits Earned Fall Semester 1974-75	Projected for Full Year	Difference in Yearly Rate
21	11	42.5	22	44	+ 1.5
22	11	40	24	28	- 12
23	11	0	10	20	+ 20
24	11	10	17.5	35	+ 25
25	12	38	14	28	- 10
26	12	22.5	25.5	51	+ 22.5
27	12	45	48	96	+ 51
28	12	38	33.5	67	+ 29
29	12	35	15	30	- 5
30	12	15	9.5	19	+ 4

The data in Table 5 show that twenty (20) of the thirty (30) students (67 percent) increased acquisition of high school credits while attending Walbridge Academy as compared to their rates of acquisition for the previous year. The average increase in credits acquired (projected) for those twenty students is 18.9 per student. Those ten students who demonstrated decreased (projected) rate of credit acquisition maintained a mean rate of 11.7 credits.

FOLLOW-UP OF 1973-74 STUDENTS

The staff of Information Services Incorporated identified all students admitted to Walbridge in September, 1973 who had completed that entire academic year. Records of the Grand Rapids Public Schools were examined to determine which of these students were currently enrolled in a Grand Rapids public school. Of those students not enrolled in school, Walbridge staff were consulted to determine if they knew the current status of the student. Students for which no information was available were telephoned to determine their current status. The following table represents the findings of follow-up studies.

(see following page)

Table 6

Current Status of 1973-74 Students

Grade	No. in Class	Enrolled at Walbridge	Enrolled in other Grand Rapids School	Moved from District	Employed	Unemployed	Enrolled in Higher Education	Cannot Locate	Other Institution
6, 7 and 8th.	30	21	1	1		2		3	2
9th.	27	12	8		1	1		3	2
10th.	18	13	2		1	1		1	
11th.	10	8	1			1			
12th. (all graduated)	9			1	5		3		
TOTALS (N = 94)	94	54	12	2	7	5	3	7	4

Information Services, Inc.

The findings in Table 6 indicate that of the eighty-five (85) students who did not graduate, seventy-eight percent((78%) are now enrolled in school in Grand Rapids. Of these, eighty-two percent (82%) are enrolled at Walbridge. This indicates a high retention rate of both the Grand Rapids system and Walbridge Academy in particular. Focusing on 1973-74 graduating seniors, one can see that three (3) of the nine (9) are enrolled in higher education (a rate of 33-1/3 percent) and all others still residing in the area are now employed.

There were a total of twenty-four (24) telephone interviews attempted in order to collect the follow-up data; nineteen (19) were successfully completed. The students contacted were asked how they felt about Walbridge and the following represent selected comments received in answer to this question:

Illustrative Comments:

"I liked the mini-courses and individualized courses."

"I kind of liked it."

"It was alright--I liked the people."

"The classes were better because they didn't pressure me."

"I liked the setup but they didn't teach enough basics--they had a good attitude toward kids."

"I just loved it."

"Liked the freedom, especially the independent study."

"They care what you do."

EVALUATIONS OF THE COUNSELORS

As a part of the overall study of the effects of Walbridge Academy on students, the views of counselors were sought. Four areas of development were considered: 1) students' confidence in themselves to do school work, 2) their work habits in school, 3) their social adjustment in school, and 4) their ability to control their tempers.

The data reported in the following table records the counselors' perceptions of changes in their students. It is the observation of the counselors that the students have developed in favorable directions in all four areas.

Of all the areas investigated, the counselors perceived the least amount of growth with respect to work habits. Perhaps, though, this is understandable when one examines the nature of the student population served, in that their past work habits may have generally been inappropriate for academic successes.

In summary, the counselors view most students as having progressed appreciably in the four areas of affective development examined. It is important to note, however, that at the time of post-testing, counselors still view over forty percent (40%) of students as needing special programming assistance.

Table 7

Teachers' Perceptions of Changes
in Attention Needed by Their Students in Relation to
Their Self-Confidence, Work Habits, Social Behavior and Temperament

Levels of Teacher Attention Needs	Student Characteristics: Self-Confidence Structure 9/74	Self-Confidence Structure 4/75	Work Habits 9/74	Work Habits 4/75	Social Behavior 9/74	Social Behavior 4/75	Temperament 9/74	Temperament 4/75
A. Needs very little special assistance. Relatively independent. Could function in any program.	29.8%	53.6%	27.4%	49.3%	30.0%	55.9%	39.2%	54.7%
B. Needs special programming and assistance. Student would have some difficulties in a traditional classroom without special assistance.	59.9%	43.8%	55.2%	47.0%	54.9%	40.0%	43.8%	32.6%
C. Borderline development. Needs extensive help and individual attention. Very doubtful that student could function in typical school setting.	12.4%	2.5%	15.3%	4.6%	15.0%	3.2%	16.0%	2.5%

INTERVIEWS WITH PROFESSIONAL STAFF

In this section of the report the views of the professional staff of Walbridge are summarized. It should be noted that this summarization is not for reporting only those staff perceptions which are judged by the evaluators to be "correct." Regardless of the "rightness" of a particular staff person's orientation, such perspective can have considerable consequence for the conduct and success of Walbridge. It is important to our evaluation to be as clear as possible about the consequences and variations in viewpoints regarding the major strengths and weaknesses of the program, as well as recommendations for improvement.

Twenty-five (25) staff members were personally interviewed during December, 1974. Each interview ranged from thirty (30) to fifty (50) minutes in length. An open-ended approach was utilized so that the staff were free to express concerns in those areas which were of most importance to them. In accordance with our agreement to present an organized summary of staff perspectives with as little distortion as possible, direct quotes are used for illustration. Also, as agreed, we have taken the liberty of omitting those expressions which would identify a particular person as being the source. Where the ideas were shared, one quote may be used, and the number who also share this perspective is indicated. Sometimes the quotes have been abridged or edited where it was judged that it would not distort the main idea, and tangential or redundant phrases were a part of the expression. From a review of staff interview notes, staff comments are grouped into categories of concern.

Physical Facilities

1. *BUILDING*--Three (3) staff persons (of 25) believed that the building was acceptable. A larger number (five) felt that the age of the building created a handicap, while three (3) staff members reported that the major problem with the building was the shortage of space, particularly for special activities and classes.
2. *HEAT*--Six (6) staff members (of 25) reported that the heating of the building was a very real problem which created an environment nonconducive for optimal instruction. Students frequently wear coats to classes.
3. *IMAGE*--Four (4) staff persons expressed concern about the image of the school. Staff feel that this is at least partially attributable to the building, which was once used to house the Coldbrook School for special education, and may still bear connotations as a school for "special" kids.

Administration

1. *LEADERSHIP*--Staff members were generally very positive and supportive of the leadership style and programming existing in Walbridge Academy. Six (6) staff members made special commendations on this point.
2. *PREPARATION TIME*--Six (6) staff persons felt that there is insufficient time for constructing mini-courses and planning activities. It was particularly noted that there was not enough time to clarify goals.
3. *STAFF CONSISTENCY*--The greatest number of staff (15 out of 25) expressed concern for the inconsistency exhibited by teachers in their approach with students. A lack of in-service training is seen by the staff as the major reason for such inconsistencies.

In-Service Training

Some (4) staff persons report that they need more in-service training--especially with respect to basic concepts and principles of behavior modification.

Behavior Modification

1. *ATMOSPHERE*--There was general agreement of respondents (7 out of 25) that behavior modification techniques employed at the Academy assist in creating a positive academic climate. These techniques are perceived as particularly important in shaping more desirable social behavior.
2. *AS A TECHNIQUE*--Praise for the technique runs very high among some staff (12 out of 25). However, three (3) staff members expressed reservations about the behavioral technique. The following statement represents this minority perspective: *"Behavior modification should be used understandingly with the knowledge of the student that leads toward not abusing the individual."*

Curriculum

1. *DIVERSITY*--Several staff (6) view the curriculum of Walbridge Academy as too limited, and that students aren't free to take the breadth of courses usually available in a regular school.
2. *READING PROGRAM*--The Alpha program and EDL lab are viewed as extremely effective components of the curriculum by four (4) staff persons.
3. *INDIVIDUALIZATION*--Students in the program need individualized instruction and benefit a great deal from it, according to thirteen (13) staff members. Such individualization is generally viewed as an effective teaching strategy for this group of students.

General

1. *SIZE*--Many staff members (13 out of 25) indicated that the small size of the program was an advantage. There was general agreement that the program should not be expanded to the degree that personal interaction between students and staff are impeded.
2. *INVOLVEMENT*--Six (6) respondents indicated that one of the better aspects of the program is the degree of involvement with students. Further, these staff persons delineated several attributes which might be further refined. Specific comments centered around three areas of involvement. The first concerned counselors not being more conspicuous in classrooms and other areas besides their offices. The second concerned expanding the degree to which students had educational activities in the community as opposed to close restriction to the physical facilities of the Academy. A third area of concern includes the development of strategies to further increase cooperation and involvement with parents.

3. *STATUS*--Seven (7) respondents expressed views that the program does not receive adequate support or recognition from the Board of Education as a legitimate educational option for Grand Rapids students.

In addition to the personal interviews during December, each staff member was provided with an open-ended questionnaire during May, 1975. The instrument gave the staff the opportunity to summarize their views concerning the particular strengths of Walbridge Academy, as well as major weaknesses and suggestions for improvement in the program. The following sections summarize staff responses to these questionnaires.

Of the thirteen (13) questionnaires returned, there was a fair consensus as to what the strengths of the program are.

Strengths	Number of Staff Indicating
Individualized nature of instruction	11
The quality and competency of the staff	10
The informality and flexibility of staff/ student relations	9
The Director	7
The nature of the reinforcement system	7
The small size of the school and classes	5
The mini-course structure	4
Using specific performance objectives	2
The quality of the reading program	2
The short class time periods	1
The diversity of students attending	1

These responses indicate a great deal of satisfaction with the staff, director, and structure of the school. There was much less consensus, however, concerning the major weaknesses of the program.

Major Weaknesses	Number of Staff Indicating
Lack of staff consistency	7
Work too easy and unchallenging at upper levels	4
Always last priority for funding	4
Poor attendance	3
Little opportunity for group activities and work	3
Lack of physical education and gym facility	3
Too little active parent/community involvement	2
Stigma of the school is negative	2
Ability of staff to use behavior modification	1
Lack of skills training	1
Lack of cafeteria staff	1
Lack of assembly space	1
Lack of leadership	1
The reinforcement system	1

The recommendation most frequently offered by the staff was regarding the provision of more adequate staff training focusing on basic principles and techniques of behavior modification. The second major suggestion has to do with making sure that the heating system is made more adequate for the next winter season. Additionally, staff expressed concern for better attendance, more diversified group activities, increased materials and equipment, and the development of more and better quality mini-courses.

Recommendations for Improvement	Number of Staff Indicating
More staff training	6
Better heating	4
Provide a fairer budget for trips and equipment	3
More and better mini-courses	3
Development of new and better attendance policies	3
Establish better community/parent relations	2
Increase career education opportunities	2
Critically examine the role of interns and student teachers	2
Develop better lunch program	2
Provide space for group activities and work	2
More psychological services for hostile students	1

Recommendations for Improvement	Number of Staff Indicating
More role definition for staff	1
Develop a better library	1
Publicize and communicate a positive image of Walbridge Academy	1
Provide more planning time to develop mini-courses	1
Give more positive reinforcement for staff	1
Set up a system of hall monitors	1

Summary

Staff perspectives remained fairly constant during the course of the school year. Generally, it is evident that the staff is very pleased with their school and program. Major concerns and recommendations of those responding related to improvement of their own performance and competencies. It is important to note that the staff of Information Services Incorporated was impressed with the morale and dedication of the Walbridge staff.

STUDENT EVALUATIONS

In early April, 1975 questionnaires were distributed to the students of Walbridge Academy. Student volunteers were utilized to distribute and collect the one-page questionnaire. The table which follows presents the responses to these items. In addition, there are selected quotes abstracted from the open-ended portions of the questionnaire.

A total of ninety-four (94) questionnaires were returned. Analysis of student responses follows the presentation of data.

Table 8

Student Questionnaire Data

Question:	Responses Yes	No	Undecided
1. *"Do you feel you have progressed at this school?"*	63	13	18
2. *"Are you happier at school this year?"*	63	15	14
5. *"Are you able to read better this year than last?"*	57	20	17
6. *"Are you better in math this year than last?"*	57	23	12
7. *"Would you like to attend this school next year?"*	61	14	16
8. *"Is there any subject that you would like more help in or would like to study more?"*	39	51	0

Comments relative to item (1) concerning student perceptions of their academic progress include:

"Because it's not like other schools--the teachers don't bug you."

"I get along with the other kids and I work better."

"The teachers explain really good."

"It's the first school that got me to come and to work."

"Because I understand the work, and I think the teachers are a lot of help."

"Because I don't have to skip because I only go a half day and I'm here more often."

"I learned a lot of things here I didn't learn anywhere else."

"It seems there isn't enough variety of work."

"I can take my time."

I love this school better than my school I used to go to."

"I feel that the teachers and counselors and principal are doing the best that they know how for me and I thank them for that."

"I learned how to understand other students."

"All my grades are better."

"The teachers are all working hard."

When asked what they liked about the school, the following items were given:

Characteristic	Number of Times Mentioned
1. Short hours and classes	17
2. Teachers and other staff	14
3. The "system" in general	14
4. Recreation room	13
5. Individualized learning	7
6. Good human relationships and atmosphere	5

On the other hand concerning things that they didn't like about the school, the students responded with the following items:

Characteristic	Number of Times Mentioned
1. Nothing	14
2. School itself	5
3. Way credits are awarded	5
4. Classes	5
5. Time-outs	5
6. The "system" in general	5
7. Too small a school	3
8. No gymnasium	2
9. The early morning starting time	2

Of those students who stated that they desired more help in a subject or more study in a particular area, the following subjects were listed:

Subject	Number of Times Mentioned
Math	12
American Life	4
Art	4
Reading	4
Various technical shops	4
Business/Secretarial	2
Spelling, Health, Geography, Music, Government, Science, Psychology	1 each

Finally, the questionnaire contained space for "additional comments." The majority of the students did not comment further, however, the following comments were received:

"I think we have some real good teachers here."

"Walbridge has come a long way from last year because there are many more things to do."

"I like the school . . . it's alright but I don't think it has enough in it for someone who wants to go to college."

"This is my fourth year at Walbridge, and each year they change the school enough so that second year students feel out of place."

"This is the best school I've ever been in."

"The school is alright."

"The school is good for students who hate school."

Conclusions:

The data in Table 8 indicate that most (67%) students are of the opinion that they have progressed at Walbridge. Most students feel that they are happier this year, and would like to attend Walbridge next year. Additionally, students view themselves as developing better skills in reading and math. Students are generally positive about their experience at the school. It would appear from the students' perspective that the major strength of Walbridge is the quality of the staff and the way the program is structured. Perceived major weaknesses relate to the limited opportunities for specialized courses and activities associated with comprehensive high schools.

PARENT EVALUATIONS

During April, 1975 fifty-one (51) parents of Walbridge students were randomly contacted by telephone. The open-ended questions focused on: 1) parental perceptions of student progress at the Walbridge Academy; 2) general satisfaction of their child's school-related experiences since attending Walbridge; 3) changes noted in their children; 4) suggestions for changing the school; and 5) plans regarding their further enrollment of their children in Walbridge.

Table 9

Parent Questionnaire Data

Question:	Responses Yes	No	Undecided
1. *"Do you feel that your child (or children) has progressed at the school?"*	*78%*	*8%*	*14%*
2. *"Does your child appear to be happier at school this year?"*	*84%*	*8%*	*8%*
3. *"Are there some things about the school you would like changed?"*	*25%*	*69%*	*6%*
4. *"Are you planning to enroll your children for the fall semester?"*	*75%*	*8%*	*17%*

Additional comments on student progress include:

"They look forward to points, study better, more willing to learn."

"She thinks teachers are so much easier for children to work with."

"He gets along better."

"Everything has improved tremendously."

"Used to fly off the handle, but not now."

"Has better attendance and seems to want to stay in school."

"He has gained self-confidence."

"He had taken up hobbies."

"Not as cranky as used to be."

"Learning more--reading more."

"Better grades."

"Seems to have more interest in getting credits."

Comments regarding aspects of the program which should be changed include:

"Recreation room could be a little more orderly."

"School day should be longer."

"The teachers should run the school instead of the children."

"Don't feel 18 and 19 year olds should go to school with 15 year olds."

"She should get harder work--try to keep up same level as other schools."

"Need better building--more books, tools and equipment."

"Should be less 'black-oriented'."

"He can't do the fundamentals like subtraction."

"The staff from top to bottom."

"Should have better racial balance."

"Cut down smoking and should have more sports activities."

"More discipline."

Additional parent comments include:

"Have nice rules on childrens' behavior."

"Male principal and counselors are a big help."

"I'll be glad when all my children can go (to Walbridge)."

"The staff is understanding and kind."

"Would like to see a school like this for younger children."

"They are doing a great job."

"They can't earn enough credits to go on in school."

"The work is too easy."

"The staff is really good."

"I wish there were more hours."

"I really approve of alternative schools--regular school counselors should do better to get kids into Walbridge."

"She's learned more than at any other school."

"The reward system seems to be good."

"We need to get better communication with teachers."

"There's too much freedom."

"My child is going to graduate and I can't see how by going only half days."

As can be seen from the responses, parents are quite content with Walbridge. Seventy-eight percent (78%) feel their child progressed; eighty-four percent (84%) feel their children are happier; and seventy-five percent (75%) plan to send their child to Walbridge next year.

Further corroboration of parent support and satisfaction can be found in the variety of parent responses to open-ended questions. In general, parents see their children as learning more, becoming much more positive to school, and improving their human relationship skills both at school and at home.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Director of Walbridge Academy was given the opportunity to construct a statement concerning his perceptions of the goals and achievements of Walbridge during this past year. A complete copy of this statement can be found in the Appendices. An abstract of that statement, prepared by Information Services Incorporated, is presented below.

Abstract

Although the goals of Walbridge Academy are consistent with other Grand Rapids Schools, emphasis is placed on development of math and reading skills, while decreasing absenteeism and dropout rates. The Director feels that more progress can be made in these areas than has previously been the case.

By instituting staff changes and modifications to the structure of the program, the Director feels that some progress has been achieved, but not as much as desired. He anticipates that for the coming year, changes in the role of counselors and greater focus on attendance will produce greater achievements.

The Director feels that more emphasis should be placed on voluntary admissions, but believes that no additional changes in budget or physical plant are necessary at this time.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

Student Composition

Students range from twelve to nineteen years of age. The student body is three-quarters (75%) male; forty-four percent (44%) are minority students. Many students are performing below grade level in reading and math when entering Walbridge although some are above average in achievement. Students generally have a history of absenteeism, and the majority have not functioned successfully at their potential in regular school settings.

Academic Achievement

The standardized testing program at Walbridge Academy is composed of the Wide Range Achievement Test for mathematics and the Nelson Reading Test for reading achievement. During this school year the manner of testing did not provide a full set of pre and post-tests, however, based on those sets completed, the average gain in math and reading by grade level is:

Grade Level	Average * Reading Gain	Average * Mathematics Gain
8	+ 2.2	+ .5
9	+ .1	+ .5
10	+ .9	+ .2
11	+ .6	+ .9
12	+ .8	0

* reported in number of grade levels

Reduction of Absenteeism

Forty percent (40%) of students entering Walbridge Academy improved attendance during their first year. The average rate of reduction of absenteeism for these students is 3.9 days per month. Sixty percent (60%) of new

students exhibited poorer attendance than at thier prior school setting.

Rate of High School Credit Acquisition

Sixty-seven percent (67%) of first entering Walbridge students increased their rate of acquisition of high school credits compared to the previous school year.

Follow-Up of Previous Students

Of those students who did not graduate, seventy-eight percent (78%) of last year's students are still enrolled in schools in Grand Rapids. Eighty-two percent (82%) of these are enrolled at Walbridge. Of the students who graduated from Walbridge, one-third are currently enrolled in higher educational institutions; the remaining two-thirds tend to reside in the Grand Rapids area and are currently employed.

Evaluations of the Counselors

The counselors indicated improvement over the school year in self-confidence, work habits in school, social behavior, and temperament. The area requiring the most attention at this point is development of better study or work habits.

Interviews with Professional Staff

The staff is generally very pleased with their school and program. Their major concerns focus on improving themselves through more training to gain greater consistency and effectiveness and expanding curriculum opportunities. The staff exhibited relatively high morale and dedication to their work.

Student Evaluations

Students generally feel that they have progressed in major academic areas while at Walbridge. Students generally report that they are happier

at school this year than last year. They would like to see the program become more of a "full-fledged" school--in the sense of providing more diversified curricular and extracurricular opportunities.

Parent Evaluations

Parents have indicated that they tend to be satisfied with Walbridge. The vast majority report that their children had progressed, were happier, and that they planned to send their children to the school next year.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Clearly, Walbridge Academy is achieving its objectives with a large proportion of its students. Since these students have historically not achieved to their potential in regular school programs, this accomplishment is significant.

The following recommendations are proposed as an aid for further improvement of the program at Walbridge. The following result from the data presented herein, as well as evaluation staff observations of the program at Walbridge.

General

1. There is concern expressed by the staff and students of Walbridge about the "image" of the school. We recommend that the Director meet with the Director of Pupil Services and Alternative Education to develop strategies to strengthen the image of alternative education in general, and Walbridge Academy in particular.
2. We suggest that the school staff examine the current budget structure, including proportions for extracurricular activity and field trips and determine if these allocations are appropriate to achieve the goals of the program.
3. Although the school is to be commended for the degree to which it has attempted to involve parents and the community, we feel that increased efforts in this area may be necessary. Perhaps the Advisory Council could be used to assist Walbridge staff in developing strategies for more actively involving parents and the surrounding community.

Curriculum

1. We recommend that opportunities and in-service training be provided for the faculty to develop materials and mini-courses for higher level students.

2. One of the limitations of the current program is that certain students do not seem to be reinforced by currently employed practices of reward, i.e., rights to use the recreation room. We suggest that the staff consider the possibility of providing a more diversified set of reinforcers for such students. Perhaps field trips, extracurricular activities or special assignments could be used effectively for this purpose.
3. It is recommended that the staff of Walbridge, with the assistance and cooperation of the Office of Curriculum Planning and Evaluation and the Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services, engage in a thorough analysis of the curriculum at the Academy.
4. The stress in the curriculum is clearly on the development of reading and math skills. The data on such achievement indicate the wisdom of this emphasis. However, attempts to expand the curriculum into skill and career areas might be considered. In addition, practical courses in life matters such as shopping and insurance could be developed to "round out" the curriculum offerings.

Physical Facilities

1. There is a problem with the building heat which, if possible, should be examined by the appropriate plant administrators. Because the building is old, the length of heating hours may need to be expanded so that at least temperatures in the high sixties can be maintained rather than in the fifties, which is often the case now. The service department has certified that the system is in good repair so the problem seems to be caused by energy saving practices of limiting the number of heating hours. Energy conservation by keeping temperatures in the high sixties is a desirable activity. Perhaps the number of

heating hours could be increased to maintain such temperatures.

2. We recommend that the staff of Walbridge, perhaps with the guidance of other school service personnel, consider the current space utilization practices at the Academy. Specifically, this assessment should include considerations about the utilization of space for group activities and for gathering places for students, as well as allocations for classroom activities. The provision of space for group activities would be a desirable outcome of such a review.

Students

1. Clearly the most difficult aspect of dealing with the student population of Walbridge focuses around the attendance problem. This is acknowledged as a major problem, and it would seem that additional efforts must be put forward in this area. Perhaps the attendance officer could be more active outside of the school building to follow up on students who are attendance problems. The staff should focus on this problem and develop strategies for effectively dealing with it so that better attendance will result.

2. The importance of standardized testing cannot be overemphasized. Walbridge is to be commended for its improvement in this area. However, the degree of incomplete data in this area does not allow for the usual uses of these data for program planning and evaluation. We suggest that the Director, in conjunction with the Office of Curriculum Planning and Evaluation, develop more effective strategies for obtaining and recording such data.

Staff

1. It is apparent that the staffs' biggest concern has to do with their

own consistency in regard to classroom behavior and using the reinforcement system. Also, their major suggestion for change has to do with the provision of more staff training. It is recommended that the Director consult with his staff and determine if an effective series of in-service training sessions can be developed in accordance with staff needs. A proposal for such in-service should be developed and submitted to the Director of In-Service Training.

Final Report
The Walbridge Academy

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The Director of Walbridge Academy was given the opportunity to construct a statement concerning his perceptions concerning the goals and achievements of Walbridge Academy during this past year. The following represents the Director's response to this opportunity:

"The goals and objectives for students who attend Walbridge Academy are the same goals and objectives as are stated in the Grand Rapids Board of Education philosophy of education, page 8111, under Internal Board Policies. What is deemed good for all students in Grand Rapids is also deemed good for students attending Walbridge Academy.

My personal goals for the 1974-75 school year were:

1. To average between two and three years gain in the area of reading skills.

2. To average between one and two years grade gain in area of math skills.

3. Student attendance will increase to 75%.

4. Our holding power on students will increase.

Only one of the above goals will be achieved in the 1974-75 school year. Our test scores are incomplete, but results so far indicate that we will not show the gains I had hoped for. Student attendance has averaged close to 65%. Our holding power on students remained about the same as last year - a turn over to 125 students. Last year we had seventeen seniors graduate and this year we have eighteen, an increase of one. I firmly believe that we are capable of, and must find solutions to meeting the goals I have given Walbridge. If our methods and style of an educational delivery system cannot improve on what has been done in a so-called "traditional" school then we should cease operating.

This past year we have done some things differently in attempting to meet our goals. We added an additional math instructor halfway through the year; we implemented a resource center; we reduced the time students would or could normally spend in a recreation room by one-half (we reduced the number of recreation rooms from two to one); we instituted a system of awards based on student achievement, attendance and social behavior. At the same time we also increased our minimal student behavior expectations. Students were suspended every time for fighting, many students over age sixteen and attending less than 80% were dropped from our roles to make room for new students. We went to an "inhouse" thirty minute time out as opposed to students having to leave the building on a time out. We had a workshop in the summer of 1974 to upgrade our mini-courses and provide better materials for students to study. All of these changes improved what we are and have to offer students, but statistically did not show any fantastic gains.

For next year we are already planning some new changes to help us help students meet the goals we must meet. The roles of our counseling staff will change, and this will perhaps be the most significant change. We will be initiating a career education component. Our feedback system to parents in regards to student attendance should improve. We are thinking about a system of removing poor attenders from their regular class schedule and thus provide modeling only good attendance patterns in the regular classroom. We would need room to house our non or poor attenders for short periods of time.

I am also convinced that if our admissions policies change to include more voluntary admissions that our goals will be more readily reached. At the present time approximately twenty percent of our available slots are reserved for students who are kicked out of school. They come to Walbridge after a lot of ill feelings are generated toward the student by the schools and by the student toward the schools.

I do not believe the amount of money spent, the physical plant, or volume of equipment has much to do with students coming to school on a regular basis and obtaining needed skills. I believe people and systems are the two most important factors.

TO SUMMARIZE:

If we can increase our students' attendance then our students will earn more credits, pick up more skills, and presumably graduate at a faster rate, this seems to be the key factor.

We don't need extra money, more staff, or a new building. We should come close to meeting goals one and two, and I'm quite certain we'll surpass goals three, four, and five next year."

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